

# Success For The Christian

Success for the Christian is easy to define but not as simple to achieve; or is it?

## Introduction

We are starting the year talking about some biblical truths. These are doctrines that span the test of time and denomination. These truths help you to be a better follower of Jesus and disciple-maker. Last week we talked about being a good steward of the resources we are entrusted with; our time, talents, and treasure. We talked about making use of these in a sustainable way.

This week we want to talk about success for the Christian. We want to share what that can look like, and how we get there. We also want to put aside some common worldly thoughts about success that have crept into Christianity around the world.

We must define success as a Christian in order to understand it.

## Christian Success

I once heard a longtime Assemblies of God missionary to Brazil say, "Success for the Christian is nothing more than living in God's perfect will for your life." That was back in 1989 and it made such an impact on me that I can remember that quote as if it was just spoken. 34 years later I still agree with that, preach and teach that, and most importantly, God has stamped my life with that.

Let's read what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:11-17.

### 2 Corinthians 5:11-17

(11) Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. (12) We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. (13) If we are "out of our mind," as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. (14) For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. (15) And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (16) So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. (17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Paul speaks to our point throughout this passage of scripture. He says things like, "we are plain to God" in verse 11, and, "we regard no one from a worldly point of view" in verse 16, and most importantly, "if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old is gone, the new is here!" in verse 17.

As Christians our success is measured against the plan and purpose that God has for us; collectively and individually. What the world sees or thinks is irrelevant. Our joy, wisdom, power, and authority, do not come from the world. These are all supplied by God through the Holy Spirit for those who follow Jesus Christ with their whole heart.



That is how we succeed as Christians. We measure all that we do against the plan and purpose God has for ourselves and our groups. When we are fulfilling the will of God by carrying out his plan and purpose we are successful. The results do not define our success. It is our obedience to God's call and the faithful use of the wisdom, power, authority, and resources that God provides.

All of this points to something that is completely opposite of the world's thinking. Success for the Christian means daily saying, "Not my will, but yours, Lord."

### Not My Will, But Yours

Jesus is the son of God. He is God's only son who was sacrificed to pay the price for the sins of the world, past, present, and future. The gospel of Luke shares about Jesus' night of prayer before he was betrayed and handed over to the Romans for trial and execution. The whole gospel of Luke speaks of Jesus' life and ministry. We read many miracles and learn many life lessons from his teachings recorded in this and the other gospels.

In Luke 22 we read about Jesus' time on the mount of olives in prayer. He was in anguish and knew what was coming. As Jesus was praying about what was about to happen to him, listen to what he prayed found in Luke 22:42:

Luke 22:42

(42) "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Jesus asks God the Father to take this cup from him if he was willing. He then follows it with, "yet not my will, but yours be done."

Success for the Christian is not about our own will. It is not even about our own success as the world would define success. Success for the Christian is merely trusting God and doing what he calls us to do with the tools and resources he provides for us.

Unfortunately, we live in this world that sees success being anything that is bigger and better. If you have a bigger house than your neighbor, you are more successful. Maybe you have more friends than anyone in your community or social group, so you are more successful. This isn't isolated to worldly things, either. It does creep into the church. Some pastors see themselves as more successful because they have been able to build a bigger building or have more church sites than their fellow pastors in their area. This is how the world thinks and sees things, and is not biblical.

There is nothing wrong with having a big house or more friends if that big house is used to minister to people and that larger number of friends are all encouraged and led to serve others in greater ways as the Lord calls and equips them. But to build a large church building or flaunt wealth to show stature or prestige, is not in keeping with the humility of Christ nor the simplicity of the gospel.

We must stay within God's will for our own lives in order to be successful Christians and lead others in a Christian life. When looking at success for the Christian, less is often more.



## Less Is More

Some Christians have been very successful in both God's plans and the perspective of the world, but that is rare. It doesn't take long to find famous Christians in ministry that had major failures that brought more discredit and shame on the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church than success.

The sinful nature that is inherent in all of us is constantly trying to win against Christ in us. When we focus on the things of this world we start to think like this world. Our mind conforms to what the world describes as success. The world teaches you to compare yourself to everyone around you and do better, build bigger, have more money, etc.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12:2:

### Romans 12:2

(2) Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

To determine God's will for you, you must not conform to the way the world thinks. Bigger is not better. Rich is not wealthy. Your own thoughts and wisdom are foolishness.

You must transform yourself by allowing God to transform your mind. It is only then that you will be able to determine God's will for you and then you can use the time, talent, and treasure he provides to fulfill the plans and purposes he destined for you. Then, and only then, will you see success as a Christian.

Be transformed. Do not be like the world. We don't look like the world. We should resemble Christ. Humble, caring, loving others more than you love yourself.

## Conclusion

We spend a lot of time today trying to get ahead and succeed in life. The world tries to define success as being wealthy or famous or having a large following. God defines success as living in his perfect will for your life.

Success for the Christian does not mean you will not gain wealth or fame, but it does mean that if you receive those things, God has a plan for you to use them to minister to others in some way.

Don't worry about what others are doing or thinking. His plan for you is just for you, and only you can have success in it. Others may be able to accomplish it, but only you can succeed in what God plans for you and calls you to do.

Success for the Christian is nothing but living in the perfect will of God.

